

Message Text

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SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF CLIMATE IN BURUNDI TOWARD U.S.

REF: USIA 10677 CIRCULAR

1. LANLOCKED, RELATIVELY ISOLATED, INTERNALLY TROUBLED BURUNDI TENDS TO HAVE A MYOPIC, SIMPLISTIC, AND INNATELY DISTRUSTFUL VIEW OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD, WHICH DIFFERS EVEN FROM ITS THREE NEIGHBORS, TANZANIA, ZAIRE, AND RWANDA. BURUNDI'S ETHNIC TENSIONS HAVE ADDED TO THE PREOCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC POLITICS AND TO DEFENSIVENESS ABOUT EXTERNAL RELATIONS. THUS, BURUNDI SEEKS TO SUBMERGE ITSELF UNOBTRUSIVELY IN THE OAU AND AMID THE NON-ALIGNED "PROGRESSIVE" MAJORITY AND TO PROMOTE GOOD RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS WHO MIGHT OTHERWISE SUPPORT BURUNDI DISSIDENT ELEMENTS. LACKING ANY FOREIGN POLICY ORIENTATION THAT IS NOT RPT NOT COMPLETELY PAROCHIAL, BURUNDI LEADERS ARE CONTENT, FOR PROTECTIVE COLORATION, TO REPEAT THE RADICAL PRONOUNCEMENTS OF VARIOUS THIRD WORLD AND EAST ASIAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. NOT SURPRISINGLY, THEREFORE, THE U.S. IS PUBLICLY PORTRAYED AS AN IMPERIALISTIC SUPERPOWER, EVEN LESS SYMPATHETIC TO THIRD WORLD CAUSES AND DEVELOPMENT NEEDS THAN THE SOVIET UNION, WHICH AT LEAST IN WORDS SUPPORTS THE HAVE-NOT COUNTRIES. THE FEW MEDIA HERE HAVE EVEN GLOATED OVER THE RECENT SETBACKS TO "THR INTER-NATIONAL GENDARME".

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2. U.S.-USSR DETENTE HAS NO PARTICULAR MEANING TO THE BURUNDIANS, EXCEPT PERHAPS IN THE CHINESE CONTEXT OF BEING A PLOT BETWEEN THE TWO SUPERPOWERS TO DIVIDE WORLD HEGEMONY. BURUNDI IS HAPPY TO BELIEVE THAT CIA ACTIVITIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME WORLD ILLS AND US ECONOMIC POWER FOR MOST OF THE OTHERS. THERE IS THUS SUSPICION OF U.S. MOTIVES BOTH WORLDWIDE AND IN RELATION TO BURUNDI. THIS ATTITUDE DOES NOT RPT NOT SPILL OVER TO THE WEST-EUROPEAN "HAVE" NATIONS (EXCEPT FOR SOME RESIDUAL FEELING AGAINST THE EX-COLONIAL POWER, BELGIUM), BECAUSE THEY ARE IDENTIFIED, THROUGH THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, AS FRIENDLY TO AFRICAN ASPIRATIONS AND PRIME CONTRIBUTORS TO ITS PROGRESS.

3. DESPITE THE FREQUENT MOUTHING OF NORTH KOREAN, INDOCHINESE COMMUNIST, CHINES, LIBYAN, AND ALGERIAN SLOGANS AND CAUSES, THE REGIME IS PRIVATELY VERY CAUTIOUS ABOUT RADICALISM AND HAS NO SOCIALIST OBJECTIVES OF ITS OWN. THE GENUINE CATHOLICISM OF PRESIDENT MICOMBERO AND OTHER LEADERS MAKES THEM PERSONALLY DISTRUSTFUL OF COMMUNIST MOTIVES AND EVEN OF COMMUNIST AID ACTIVITIES IN BURUNDI. TOPMOST OFFICIALS HERE, IN SPITE OF THEIR LONG-TIME PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE VIET CONG AND SIHANOUK WERE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN PRIVATELY SCORNFUL OF THE U.S. FOR ABANDONING ITS FRIENDS AND TO HAVE COMMENTED THAT ONE NEEDED BETTER METHODS FOR FIGHTING THE COMMUNISTS THAN THE AMERICANS WERE USING. MOREOVER, THESE SAME OFFICIALS REALIZE THAT BURUNDI'S FUTURE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, PARTICULARLY ITS MINERAL WEALTH, WILL DEPEND ON WESTERN SUPPORT AND INVESTMENT.

4. THE PROBLEM OF THE U.S. IMAGE IN BURUNDI IS NOT RPT NOT, THEREFORE, THAT THE REGIME THINKS AMERICA TO BE A PAPER TIGER (IT DOES NOT RPT NOT) OR ON THE DECLINE. RATHER, IT IS THAT AMERICA IS SEEN AS REMOTE AND UNFORTHCOMING ON ISSUES OF DIRECT CONCERN TO BURUNDI AND OTHER DESPERATELY POOR DEVELOPING AFRICAN NATIONS. TO THE EXTENT THAT U.S. PRIVATE CAPITAL TAKES A LEADING ROLE (AS IT WELL MAY) IN DEVELOPING BURUNDI'S MINERAL RESOURCES, ATTITUDES TOWARD AMERICA MAY EVEN IMPROVE IN RULING CIRCLES. HOWEVER, THIS IS HARDLY LIKELY TO CAUSE A SHIFT IN BURUNDI'S SUPPORT OF RADICAL CAUSES IN OPPOSITION TO THE U.S. AT THE UNITED NATIONS AND IN THIRD WORLD FORUMS. NOR WILL IT MODIFY THE STAPLE DIET OF ANTI-AMERICAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS "ANALYSES" WHICH PERMEATE THE UPRONA PARTY'S OCCASIONAL PERIODICAL. (THE MIMEOGRAPHED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DAILY NEWS SHEET DOES NOT EDITORIALIZE ON FOREIGN POLICY BUT CARRIES REGULAR AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE ITEMS.) IN SUM, BURUNDI WILL NOT SEPARATE ITSELF FROM OVERTLY ANTI-U.S. ATTITUDES OF THE MOST SHRILL OF ITS OAU BRETHREN, AND IT WILL CONTINUE TO HARBOR SUSPICIONS ABOUT AMERICAN GOOD-WILL AND ACTIONS TO BURUNDI, BUT IT WILL NOT RPT NOT LET THESE VIEWS AFFECT BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. IN ANY FIELD.
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